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PATENT APPLICATION

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the Application of

Shinobu OZEKI et al.

Group Art Unit: 2624

Application No.: 09/865,570

Examiner: K. Pendergrass

Filed: May 29, 2001

Docket No.: 109663

For: MULTIFUNCTION SYSTEM

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

In reply to the January 12, 2005 Office Action, reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The courtesies extended to Applicant's representative by Examiner Pendergrass at the interview held February 16, 2005, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,872,869 to Shimizu et al. ("Shimizu"). This rejection is respectfully traversed as Shimizu fails to disclose, teach or suggest all the features recited in claim 1.

Independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a multifunction system comprising units having optical input and output signals. Specifically, the multifunction system comprises an image output unit capable of receiving an optical signal and a first functional unit that has a first optical signal output capable of outputting an optical signal and outputs the optical signal

according to a first function through the first optical signal output unit. The multifunction system further comprises an optical signal distribution medium to which the image signal input unit, the first optical signal output unit, the second optical signal output unit and the optical signal input unit are connected, and which distributes an optical signal to a connected optical unit. Shimizu does not disclose, teach or suggest any of these features.

Notwithstanding the assertion in the Office Action that Shimizu discloses an optical signal transmission medium through which the information generating unit, the reader and the printer are connected via optical fiber cables, it is respectfully submitted that the disclosure suggests otherwise. For example, at col. 3 lines 47-53, Shimizu discloses an image processing system consisting of an image information generating unit, a reading unit and printing unit, which may use optical cables to connect the system to other similar systems. Nowhere does Shimizu disclose, teach or suggest that the image information generating unit, the reader and the printer communicate with each other via optical signals.

Further, Shimizu discloses a block diagram in Fig. 2 in which the only optical fiber interface 70 is an external interface that connects the image information generating unit 1 of the image processing apparatus with other similar systems via optical fiber cables 700 (see col. 3, lines 48-53). Similarly, at col. 3 lines 34-38, Shimizu discloses that the reader 500 transmits the image signals "as electric signals to the image information generating unit," thereby suggesting that reader 500, the printer 600 and all functions within the information generating unit 1 are electrically connected and not optically connected. In support of this argument, the only cables that are disclosed, at col. 3 line 52, as being fiber optical cables are cable 700.

Applicants respectfully submit that nowhere does Shimizu disclose, teach or suggest a system wherein the inputs and outputs of its components, i.e., the reader and the printer, have optical signal inputs and outputs, as recited in independent claim 1. Accordingly, it is

respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentable over Shimizu. Claims 2, 6, 8 and 9 depend from independent claim 1 and are likewise patentable over Shimizu at least for their dependence on an allowable base claim, as well as for additional features they recite.

Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 4, 5 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shimizu in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,822,475 to Hirota et al. ("Hirota"). The Office Action further rejects claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shimizu in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,295,148 to Atlas. The Office Action asserts that Shimizu discloses all the features of claim 3-5 and 7 except for deficiencies, which are allegedly cured by Hirota or Atlas.

As discussed above, Shimizu fails to disclose, teach or suggest all the features recited in independent claim 1 from which claims 3-5 and 7 depend. Furthermore, neither Hirota nor Atlas discloses, teaches or suggests a system wherein an image output unit, a first functional unit, and a second functional unit, have optical signal inputs and outputs, as recited in independent claim 1. Accordingly, the combination of the applied art fails under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) to disclose all the features recited in claim 1. Therefore, claims 3-5 and 7 are likewise patentable over the applied art for at least their dependence on an allowable base claim, as well as for additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-9 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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